

Amdt. dated December 30, 2004

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1-6 as follows:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A process Process for enhancing the filling capacity of tobacco material tobacco, such as cut tobacco leaf or tobacco midribs, or tobacco additional material, wherein the material has an initial moisture of 10-30%, said process comprising the steps of: by treating the tobacco material within a pressure vessel having an initial moisture of 10-30% with a treatment gas selected from the group consisting of nitrogen, and/or argon, and mixtures thereof at pressures of 400 to 1,000 bar followed by a continuous decompression; and
subsequently thermally post-treating subsequent thermal post-treatment of the discharged tobacco material, characterized in that wherein the filling density of the tobacco charge material in the autoclave pressure vessel is greater than 0.2 kg/dm³.

2. (Currently Amended) The process Process according to Claim 1, wherein characterized in that the step of treating the material presents a pressure time, that is to say the time time defined between the start of pressure buildup and decompression, is said pressure time being at least 300 sec.

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3. (Currently Amended) The process Process according to Claim 1, wherein the material and 2, characterized in that the tobacco is mechanically compressed before, during or after the pressure vessel is filled.

4. (Currently Amended) The process Process according to Claim 3, wherein the material characterized in that the tobacco is heated before or during compression.

5. (Currently Amended) The process Process according to Claims 1-4, characterized in that Claim 2, wherein the pressure vessel is rapidly pressurized such that at least some of the pressure time of at least 300 sec is reached after rapid pressure buildup by involves allowing the vessel to stand under pressure.

6. (Currently Amended) The process Process according to Claim 5, wherein characterized in that after the vessel is allowed to stand, before the decompression, renewed pressurisation pressurization is performed.

Please add new claims 7-17 as follows:

7. (New) The process according to Claim 2, wherein the material is mechanically compressed before, during or after the pressure vessel is filled.

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8. (New) The process according to Claim 7, wherein the material is heated before or during compression.

9. (New) The process according to Claim 8, wherein the pressure vessel is rapidly pressurized such that at least some of the pressure time of at least 300 sec involves allowing the vessel to stand under pressure.

10. (New) The process according to Claim 9, wherein after the vessel is allowed to stand, before the decompression, renewed pressurization is performed.

11. (New) The process according to Claim 7, wherein the pressure vessel is rapidly pressurized such that at least some of the pressure time of at least 300 sec involves allowing the vessel to stand under pressure.

12. (New) The process according to Claim 11, wherein after the vessel is allowed to stand, before the decompression, renewed pressurization is performed.

13. (New) The process according to Claim 3, wherein the step of treating the material presents a pressure time defined between the start of pressure buildup and decompression, said pressure time being at least 300 sec, wherein the pressure vessel is rapidly pressurized such that at least some of the pressure time of at least 300 sec involves allowing the vessel to stand under pressure.

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14. (New) The process according to Claim 13, wherein after the vessel is allowed to stand, before the decompression, renewed pressurization is performed.

15. (New) The process according to Claim 4, wherein the step of treating the material presents a pressure time defined between the start of pressure buildup and decompression, said pressure time being at least 300 sec, wherein the pressure vessel is rapidly pressurized such that at least some of the pressure time of at least 300 sec involves allowing the vessel to stand under pressure.

16. (New) The process according to Claim 15, wherein after the vessel is allowed to stand, before the decompression, renewed pressurization is performed.

17. (New) The process according to Claim 2, wherein renewed pressurization is performed before the decompression.